



THE COMIC

BARDO THODOL

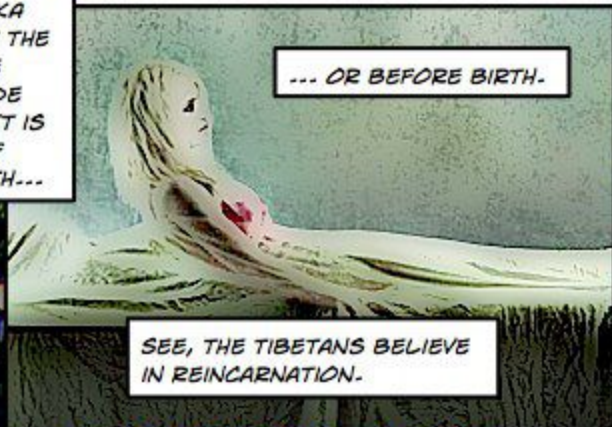


THE TIBETAN AFTERLIFE

...in easy-to-digest comic form

Preamble: What The Hell?

THE Bardo Thodol, aka "THE TIBETAN BOOK OF THE DEAD" IS THE ULTIMATE BEDTIME STORY: A GUIDE TEXT FOR THE DYING. IT IS ESSENTIALLY A MAP OF EXISTENCE AFTER DEATH...



SEE, THE TIBETANS BELIEVE IN REINCARNATION.

How?

IT DESCRIBES THE AFTERLIFE (OR BETWEEN-LIFE) JOURNEY THROUGH A KIND OF BIZARRE, PSYCHEDELIC SPIRITUAL OBSTACLE COURSE... SPIRALING DOWN TOWARD REBIRTH.

Who?



WHEE!

Why?

THE TEXT DESCRIBES ALL THE WAYS TO BREAK THE SPIRAL AND ATTAIN LIBERATION - EXIT FROM THE WHEEL OF BIRTH AND DEATH, THE HIGHEST SPIRITUAL ACHIEVEMENT IN THEIR BRAND OF BUDDHISM.

BUT BEWARE:

BIGGER IS NOT BETTER: THE LONGER YOUR Bardo JOURNEY, THE SLIMMER YOUR CHANCES OF LIBERATION.

WHY COMICS?

BECAUSE THE Bardo Thodol IS REALLY DENSE AND COMPLEX, AND THERE AREN'T GOOD WESTERN ANALOGUES; WE'VE GOT HEAVEN, HELL, PURGATORY - THE TIBETANS HAVE SIX SUCH PLACES... AND NUMEROUS INTERSTITIAL STATES, A VARIETY OF ANGELS, DEMONS, DEITIES, AND PARALLEL WORLDS. IT'S WEIRD AND DISORIENTING, AND READING IT CAN GIVE YOU A MAJOR HEADACHE. SO, IN THE INTEREST OF FUN AND SIMPLICITY, HERE'S...

THE COMIC BARDO THODOL

Part I: the Chikhai Bardo

DEATH APPROACHES

UNREALITY. CONFUSION.

FEELING AS IF
YOU'RE GOING
INSANE.


THE MOMENT OF DEATH.

LAST
BREATH...

... WHICH IS THE


PORTAL INTO
THE FIRST BARDO

THE FIRST THING YOU SEE:
THE "CLEAR LIGHT".



DO YOU RECOGNIZE
IT AS PURE AND
ULTIMATE REALITY?*

*'CAUSE YOU'D BE
LIBERATED, THEN.



MOI? PLEASE. I'M
SEEING IT IN A
SELFISH AND
EGOTISTICAL WAY.

WELL, OKAY THEN...

LET'S TRY IT THIS WAY...

SECOND CHANCE:
ANOTHER CLEAR
LIGHT, DIFFERENT
FROM THE FIRST:

DID YOU DO IT THIS
TIME? TRANSCEND
EGO AND DUALITIES IN
COMPASSION FOR ALL
SENTIENT BEINGS?*

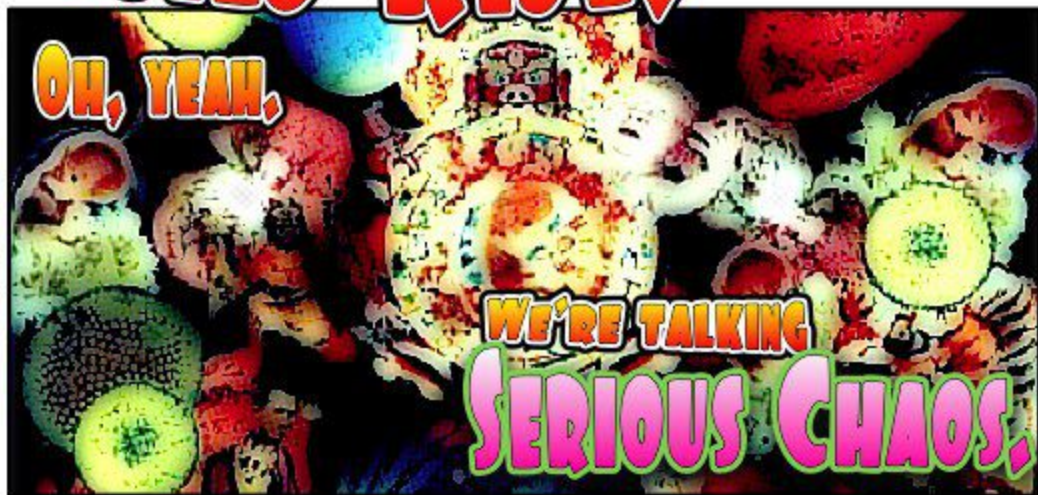
NOPE. NOT
THIS TIME,
EITHER.

*BECAUSE DITTO.



WELL, STRAP IN FOR A WILD RIDE!

BECAUSE YOU'VE WON A
TICKET TO A COMPLICATED
SEQUENCE OF SPIRITUAL
ADVENTURES WITH AN ENTIRE
PANTHEON OF BLISSFUL AND
WRATHFUL DEITIES!



OH, YEAH,

WE'RE TALKING
SERIOUS CHAOS.

Part II: the Chonyid Bardo

... SO FOR THE NEXT WEEK, YOU'LL BE EXPERIENCING BENEVOLENT HALLUCINATIONS -- A NEW ONE EACH DAY. WELCOME TO DAY 1:

VAIROCANA

SUPREME ETERNAL MOTHER/FATHER

living beautiful.

SEE THE LIGHT FROM VAIROCANA'S "LOKA", OR HOME WORLD?

... you're a tragic and

... fragile person, and

... none loves you.



AND OF COURSE, HIS "ATTENDANTS"...



Best Case:



I HAVE LIVED IN PURITY AND GRACE... AND AM THEREBY LIBERATED.

Worst Case:



BECAUSE OF MY BAD KARMA*, VAIROCANA STRIKES FEAR AND TERROR INTO MY HEART.

DEVA-LOKA

TO SPEND YOUR NEXT LIFE IN VAIROCANA'S "DEVA-LOKA": IT'S A LOT LIKE CHRISTIAN HEAVEN.

*FROM HAVING LIVED AN IMPIOUS LIFE

← OFF YOU GO!

OTHERWISE...

WELL OKAY THEN!
ON TO DAY 2:

time for a little visit with...

AKSHOBHYA IMMOVABLE BUDDHA

WITH A SMOKY LIGHT
FROM HIS HELL LOKA.



THAT'S MY
BOSS!

HOW DOES HE
MAKE YOU FEEL?

Best Case:



JOY. PURE
HEART. I AM
LIBERATED.

Worst Case:



OH, HE JUST
MAKES ME
ANGRY.

WELL OKAY THEN!

OFF YOU GO!

BRUVAR-LOKA



SPEND YOUR NEXT LIFE
IN THE EQUIVALENT OF
CHRISTIAN HELL...

Oh, Poop.

OR?
EH. DON'T FEEL
MUCH OF ANYTHING...

DAY 3:

RATNASAMBHAYA BUDDHA OF PRECIOUS BIRTH

HER LOKA MAKES
A PLEASANT
YELLOW LIGHT.

COULD YOU
REACH THE
SUGAR FOR ME?



Best Case:

JOY, PURE HEART,
BLAH BLAH. YOU
KNOW THE DRILL.

Worst Case:

GET YOUR
OWN SUGAR!
I'VE NEVER
BEEN SO
INSULTED IN
MY WHOLE
LIFE.



What could screw
it up this time?

OKAY, SO, EGOTISM,
THEN. OFF YOU GO TO...

HUMAN LOKA

YEP! THE HUMAN
WORLD! GET READY TO
DO IT ALL OVER AGAIN.

OR:
EH, DON'T FEEL
MUCH OF ANYTHING...



DAY 4:

AMITABHA BUDDHA OF INFINITE LIGHT

Best Case:

JOY, PURE HEART,
BLAH BLAH. YOU
KNOW THE DRILL.

GEE... INFINITE
LIGHT LOOKS
REALLY EXPENSIVE.
I'LL WAIT TILL IT
GOES ON SALE.

Worst Case:



OFF YOU GO!

What could screw
it up this time?

MISERLINESS, ANYONE?

PRETA-LOKA



CAN'T GET NO
SATISFACTION.

THE LAND OF "HUNGRY
GHOSTS" -- WITH HUGE
STOMACHS AND TINY
THROATS. RAVENOUS,
UNSATISFIED DESIRE.
HAVE A NICE LIFE.

DOESN'T SOUND LIKE
MUCH FUN, DOES IT?

OR?
ER, DON'T FEEL
MUCH OF ANYTHING...



DAY 5:

AMOGHASIDDHI BUDDHA OF UNFAILING SUCCESS

DREAM IT.
BELIEVE IT.
ACHIEVE IT.

Worst Case:

Best Case:

THE USUAL...

I TOTALLY ENVY
THIS GUY'S
SUCCESS. AND I
WISH I LIVED IN
HIS VENICE
CONDO.

OOPS. JEALOUSY. THAT'LL
BE GOOD FOR A LIFETIME IN...

ASURA-LOKA

A WORLD OF FIERCE
WARRIOR DEITY
DEMONS. SNAP!

OR:
EH, DON'T FEEL
MUCH OF ANYTHING...

WELL, THEN! DAY 6:

A CURTAIN CALL!

THE "RETINAL CIRCUS"!



ALL THE BUDDHAS! ALL THE LOKAS!

one Night Only!

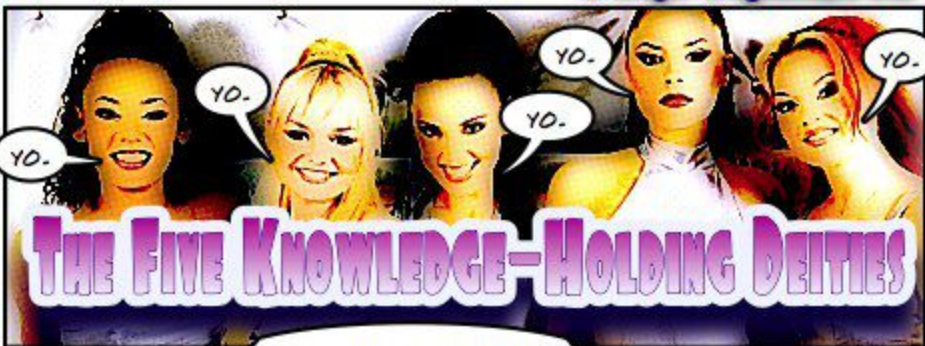
VIP Night
For Lesser Attendant
Deities

FINALLY, DAY 7:

THE END OF THE BENEVOLENT DEITIES



AND A ONE-TIME-ONLY PERFORMANCE BY



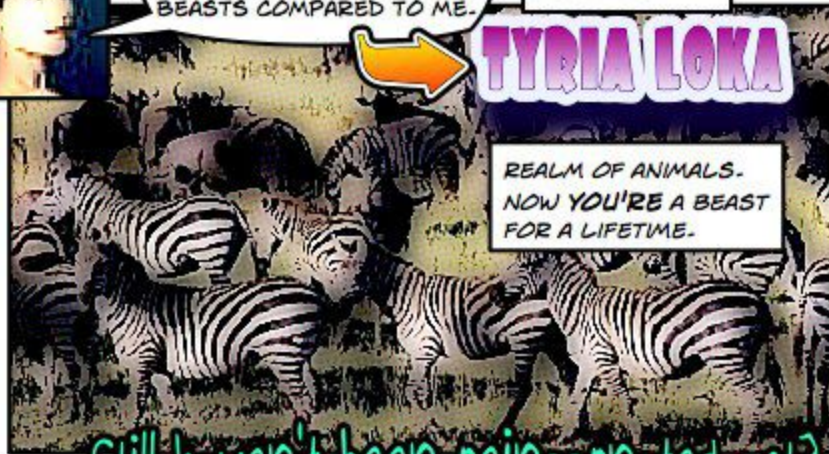
Worst Case:



OOH. WOW. THAT'S GREAT, BUT I STILL HAVE A LOT OF ILLUSIONS ABOUT MYSELF. AND THOSE CHICKS ARE BEASTS COMPARED TO ME.

WELL, YOU'RE READY FOR...

TYRIA LOKA



REALM OF ANIMALS. NOW YOU'RE A BEAST FOR A LIFETIME.

Still haven't been reincarnated yet?
WELL, DON'T GET COMFORTABLE, IT'S TIME FOR...

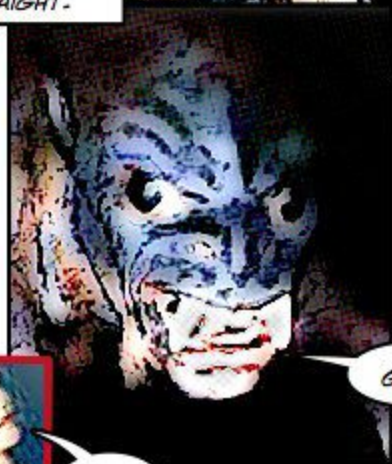
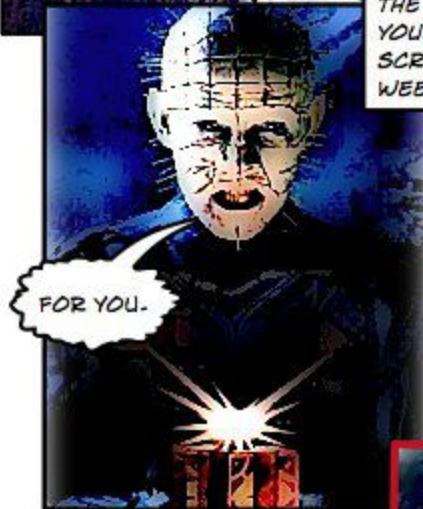
ANOTHER WEEK OF ENCOUNTERS WITH DEITIES

only this time they're

SCARY AND MALEVOLENT



THEY'LL ALL SCARE
THE CRAP OUT OF
YOU. GET READY TO
SCREAM FOR A
WEEK STRAIGHT.



Look what they have in store:

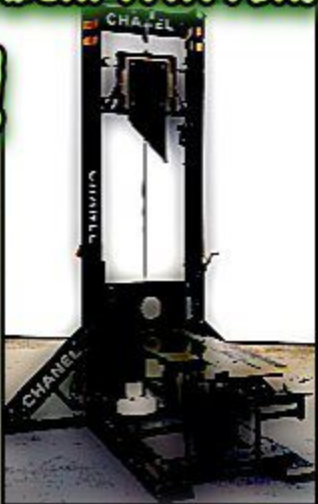
TORTURE!



OUCH!

DECAPITATION!

DISMEMBERMENT!



YOW!

ENDLESS AWAY MEETINGS!



WELL, THAT'S JUST NIFTY.

KILL ME.

SWEER WELL!!!

...and it goes on for seven days!

But here's the catch:

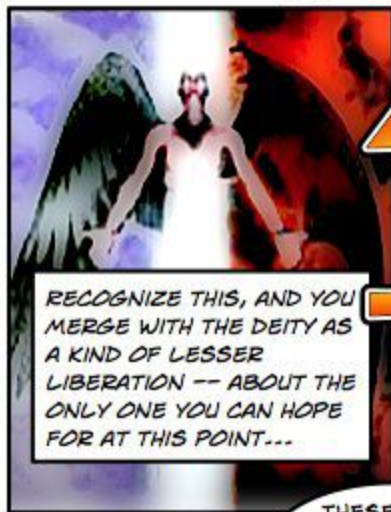
THE MALEVOLENT DEITIES

are merely

THE BENEVOLENT DEITIES



...IN DISGUISE,



RECOGNIZE THIS, AND YOU MERGE WITH THE DEITY AS A KIND OF LESSER LIBERATION -- ABOUT THE ONLY ONE YOU CAN HOPE FOR AT THIS POINT...

...IT'S THEIR DARK SIDE MANIFESTING AS A RESULT OF YOUR OWN EVIL KARMA...

BONUS:

... WITH THE ONE REMAINING POSSIBILITY TO REALIZE THAT THESE FEARSOME CREATURES ARE NOT REAL, BUT EMANATIONS FROM YOUR OWN MIND; REALIZE THIS, AND THEY WILL VANISH - AND YOU WILL BE LIBERATED.

THESE GUYS AREN'T SO SCARY. THEY'RE NOT EVEN REAL.

...AND OFF YOU GO.

OTHERWISE, YOU PASS OUT WITH FEAR, WAKING UP IN...

Part III: the Sidpa Bardo

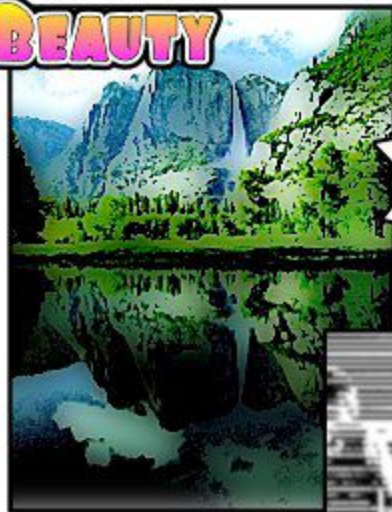


IN THE SIDPA BARDO, YOU AWAKEN IN A BARDO-BODY, MUCH LIKE THE CARTOON IDEAL OF A GHOST: YOU CAN WALK THROUGH WALLS, BLIP ACROSS GREAT DISTANCES IN AN INSTANT, STUFF LIKE THAT. DON'T GET TOO ATTACHED TO YOUR POWERS. YOU'LL JUST GET DISTRACTED FROM THE BUSINESS OF LIBERATION.



DEPENDING ON YOUR KARMA, YOU'LL WANDER THIS BARDO EXPERIENCING:

BEAUTY



WE'VE GOT IT ALL!

TERROR



OH! BEAUTY, PLEASE?

Terminal Blandness

MAYBE, MAYBE NOT. HOW'S YOUR KARMA, BABY?

WAIT! DON'T ANSWER THAT. YOU'RE ABOUT TO MEET

YAMA RAJA

AND HE'S GOT A LITTLE SOMETHING FOR YA... SOMETHING YOU MAY OR MAY NOT FIND AMUSING...



LORD OF DEATH




THE MIRROR OF
KARMA

Wherein
EVERY GOOD OR EVIL DEED
IS REFLECTED

STILL SEE SOME HEAVY KARMA HANGING OVER YOUR SOUL? WELL,

MORE DEMONS, THEN!



APPROACHING AND TORMENTING FROM EVERY SIDE. BUMMER.

YEAH, WE KNOW THIS MUST BE GETTING OLD BY NOW, BUT YOU COULD STILL - AT THIS LATE DATE - ATTAIN LIBERATION BY RECOGNIZING THE VOIDNESS OF THIS JUDGEMENT AND THE LORD OF DEATH HIMSELF. BUT YOU PROBABLY WON'T... BUT THIS IS YOUR LAST CHANCE.

NOW THE LIGHTS OF THE SIX LOKAS DAWN AGAIN

INTO ONE OF THESE LOKA WORLDS YOUR SOUL MUST BE REBORN

MAN, I'M STILL TRAUMATIZED BY ALL THESE APPARITIONS. I JUST NEED TO REST FOR A LITTLE WHILE.

IN FACT, THAT CAVE LOOKS NICE.

NOT A CAVE. A WOMB.

YOU'RE ABOUT TO BE REBORN.

THERE ARE APPARITIONS OF YOUR NEW PARENTS MAKING LOVE.

GROSS.

AT THIS POINT, PRETTY MUCH ALL YOU CAN DO IS FOCUS ON THE CHAIN OF GOOD KARMA, THE CLEAR LIGHT, AND THE VOIDNESS OF ALL THINGS.



IT MIGHT HELP YOU TO CHOOSE AN INCARNATION THAT WILL HAVE MORE SUCCESS CLOSING THE DOOR ON REBIRTH THIS TIME AROUND.

and now...

YOUR DESCENT IS COMPLETE



HAVE A NICE LIFE,

